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1967/08/09

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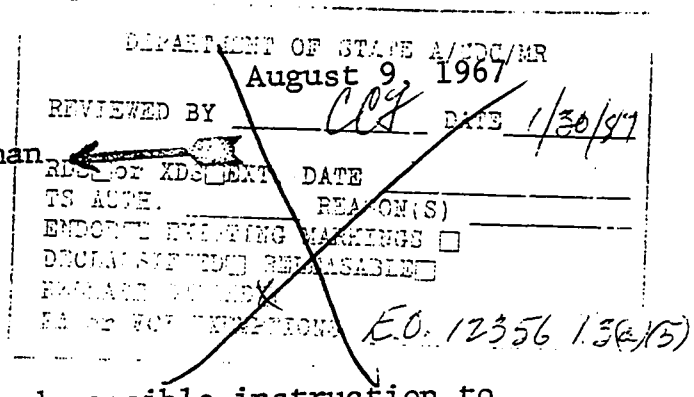

NOTE FOR: Governor Harriman
Mr. Jorden
Mr. Habib
Mr. Cooper
Mr. Isham
Mr. Davidson

I have drafted the attached possible instruction to Henry Kissinger for his trip to Paris. I suggest that Mr. Cooper be the focal point for comment and the preparation of a final draft by tonight or tomorrow morning. Kissinger comes to Washington tomorrow and will be leaving early next week.

The attached draft follows closely the independent suggestions of Gene Rostow. It is his feeling, as it is mine, that we do not wish--at least at this stage--either to endorse the Kissinger suggestion on what would be required to stop the bombing, or to be drawn into this subject through this rather tenuous channel. Instead, I believe we should take the more limited line stated in the draft, which I believe is entirely adequate to see if in fact this is a real channel that the North Vietnamese wish to use.

With this limited message, my own feeling is that Chet Cooper should not go to Paris personally. I think this would tend to dramatize things beyond what they presently deserve, and above all there is nothing of great substance in the present message, which would require his elaboration.

A part of my feeling, in drafting along these lines, arises from what I understand to have been a clear reaction at high levels yesterday--that the "no change in reinforcement" formula put to Pham Van Dong by the Frenchmen is not in fact an acceptable trade. This judgment is of course basic to our choice of approach. Another added element is

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the biographic data on Aubrac, which to me is quite unmistakable as to his political orientation.

William P.Bundy

Attachment:

Draft Proposed Reply through Aubrac/Marcovich channel to the North Vietnamese.

EA:WPBundy:mk

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DRAFT
EA:WPBundy:mk
8/8/67

MEMORANDUM

Subject: Proposed Reply Through Aubrac/Marcovich Channel to the North Vietnamese.

Background Assessment

The situation is that Aubrac and Marcovich have been told by Pham Van Dong that they could communicate with him through Mai Van Bo or his deputy, Sung, in Paris. The two Frenchmen told Pham Van Dong that they would inform him of the US reaction.

With this situation, we must in any event respond. We should do so, however, in full realization that biographic material here suggests strongly that Aubrac is a Communist of long standing; however, there is no such indication as to Marcovich, and he appears to have understood what Kissinger told him fairly clearly.

The second element in our approach is that Pham Van Dong in fact said nothing strikingly new in his conversation with Aubrac and Marcovich. He was inconclusive but apparently negative on any reciprocal action by Hanoi if we stopped bombing, and did not really respond to the (unauthorized and perhaps unduly generous) suggestion that we might do so if the

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North Vietnamese merely kept their rate of reinforcement at present levels. However, Pham Van Dong did refer to the necessity of secret discussions and did say that matters not related to South Viet-Nam could be discussed without NLF participation. He also showed some realism in recognizing that US troops could not be expected to withdraw before there was a political settlement in South Viet-Nam, and there was the least hint of flexibility in his discussion of an NLF coalition with anyone, including the present Saigon authorities.

In considering our reply, it seems clear that we want to stress our willingness for secret talks, but do not wish to get drawn further in this channel on the specific suggestion already conveyed--which is not an acceptable trade. The message below is drafted in this sense.

Message for Kissinger to Deliver to the Two Frenchmen

(If possible, this message should be delivered to Marcovich only, without Aubrach. In no event should it be delivered to Aubrach only.)

"I have given responsible officials of the American Government the full contents of your report of your trip to

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Hanoi and your talks there. I have specifically told these officials that Pham Van Dong asked that any American reaction be reported by you to one of the North Vietnamese representatives in Paris, Mai Van Bo or his deputy, Mr. Sung.

The American officials expressed their gratitude that you had been willing to make this long journey in the interests of peace, and were most interested in your report and observations.

The American officials were particularly struck by Pham Van Dong's remark that secret ~~negotiations~~ DISCUSSIONS are a necessity in this situation. They have asked me to convey to you, for transmission to the North Vietnamese, that the United States is prepared at any time for secret CONTACTS OR discussions with representatives of the North Vietnamese Government. Such discussions could be held in any location accessible to both parties. Vientiane might be one convenient location, but the Americans indicated that they would accept any reasonable suggestion as to time and place.

The American officials told me that they were unable to arrive at a clear understanding of North Vietnamese views with respect to the possibility of reciprocal restraint on the part

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of North Viet-Nam if the United States were to stop bombing of North Viet-Nam, with or without any public statement or expressed condition. The Americans believe that the question of stopping the bombing and the actions that might follow therefrom can best be clarified through direct and secret discussions along the lines proposed.

In addition, the American officials indicated that secret discussions could take up any ~~sug~~ subject that the North Vietnamese side wished. The subjectmatter of the Geneva Accords of 1954 suggests itself as particularly appropriate for private discussion, but any topic could be covered, including the timing and conditions for the withdrawal of American forces from South Viet-Nam. The American officials took pains to state that they would treat exchanges through this channel in total confidence, and that they would do the same with respect to secret discussions if these are accepted on the North Vietnamese side. At the same time, the Americans noted that when similar contacts were held in Moscow last January, they were kept entirely secret on the American side, but were revealed by the North Vietnamese through their publication of the exchange of letters between President Ho

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and President Johnson.

The American officials authorized me to receive any return message that you may receive from the North Vietnamese side, either with respect to the possibility of secret discussions or with respect to any matter that the North Vietnamese side may wish to communicate through this channel. I will provide you with full detail on how I may be reached at any time in a confidential and secret manner."

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